University of Illinois College of Medicine

Information and implications related to

Sitting for USMLE Step 1

Class of 2024

Introduction:

Students may only sit for USMLE Step 1 once they have successfully completed all of the requirements of the phase 1 curriculum through Block 8 part 1. Students are expected to sit for the USMLE Step 1 exam by March 26, 2022, prior to returning for part 2 of Block 8 (Synthesis) and Block 9 (Transition to Clerkships). Students who sit for the exam after March 26, 2022 will be considered to have “deferred” Step 1.

Due to the constraints of phase 2 clerkship scheduling, if a student does not sit by March 26, 2022 they may not they may not be registered for or begin core clerkships or phase 2/3 electives on April 25, 2022. Students may not sit for the USMLE Step 1 exam during Block 8 part 2 or Block 9 if it requires them to miss scheduled class time. Please refer to procedure number two below for more information.

Students who have deferred the USMLE step 1 exam may register for up to 6 weeks of non-clinical electives during the summer term. Further registration for additional terms/courses is determined by CCIA policies.

Deferring the USMLE Step 1 exam, and thereby deferring the start of Phase 2, is only to be considered under certain circumstances. Deferring the Step 1 exam requires the approval of the appropriate campus Dean of Student Affairs and the appropriate campus Dean of Curriculum.

Deferrals are considered for a) low likelihood of passing the exam at the time of the planned step 1 date, based on data including the Comprehensive Basic Science Self-Assessment (CBSSA) and NBME examinations given during Block 8 or during the dedicated study period or b) compelling extenuating personal circumstances.

Notes: a.) Students in the Medical Scientist Training Program (MSTP) and other joint degree programs (MPH, MBA, MS) are expected to take the USMLE Step 1 exam by March 26, 2022 and then must complete Block 8 (Synthesis) part 2 prior to “stepping out” of the MD curriculum to pursue the other degree. The same is true for students taking a leave of absence for any reason immediately following Phase 1. The student will be required to take Block 9 (Transition to Clerkships) upon return to the curriculum. If the student is planning to return to the curriculum before Block 9 is offered again, it is recommended that they take Block 9 before stepping out. b.) Students applying for ADA accommodations with the National Board of Medical Examiners (NBME) for taking the USMLE Step 1 exam are advised to begin the accommodations application process several months in advance because the application review process is very lengthy. Not having a decision from NBME with regard to their ADA accommodations application does not entitle the student to begin Phase 2 on schedule.
Students are hereby advised of the following topics related to deferring USMLE Step 1:

Procedures:

1. Students who achieve less than 2 SD below the class mean for any NBME exam during the in-seat portion of Block 8 part 1 will have a mandatory meeting with an advisor, learning specialist, or dean within student affairs or curricular affairs to develop an adjusted and approved Step 1 study plan.

2. Students whose CBSSA examination scores are of concern, based upon guidelines by the NBME and/or the Office of Student Affairs will be notified that they are required to:
   - Work with their advisor or learning specialist to determine the optimal date to sit for Step 1. Generally, this will entail demonstrating a score on a comprehensive practice exam that corresponds to a value 10-15 points above the passing score for Step 1 (as of 1/26/2021 the NBME Step 1 passing score is a 196) or two consecutive passing scores on a CBSSA. Students are advised to follow the “Key Elements of a Successful Study Plan” document, provided at the end of this document.
   - Prior to approval, the academic support staff member will work with the student to assess whether the plan is being followed and working.

3. Students who have achieved a 220 or higher (or an equated percent correct of about 75-80) on any 2 CBSSA consecutive examinations one to two weeks prior to a scheduled test date are advised that they are well poised by the NBME to pass the Step 1 exam.

4. Students who are concerned they are not making good progress toward sitting for USMLE Step 1 are encouraged to meet with a dean or student affairs/academic advisor to discuss all of the topics outlined in this document related to deferral of Step 1 and the effect of deferral on core clerkships and clinical electives. If after that meeting, the student still would like to defer, they must inform the appropriate campus deans. The request must fully outline the reason(s) the student is requesting the deferral.

5. Students who do not sit for Step 1 by March 26, 2022 must meet with the appropriate campus dean/academic advisor to discuss their academic progress toward sitting for the USMLE Step 1 exam and the likelihood that their promotion to Phase 2 will be delayed.

6. Due to the constraints of phase 2 core clerkship/clinical elective scheduling, any student who is re-entering the curriculum after deferring Step 1 must sit for the USMLE Step 1 exam at least four weeks prior to the start of the next core clerkship/clinical elective block in order to be eligible to register for core clerkships/clinical electives. Core clerkship/clinical elective sites require that all changes to students’ schedules be done at least four weeks prior to the start of the rotation. Students who are deferring will be scheduled into clerkships/electives based on availability; they are not guaranteed their
originally planned rotation schedule. Students who have deferred Step 1 must present evidence that they have taken the Step 1 exam before any clerkships will be scheduled.

- **Two-week availability:** Students must notify administration that they have completed the Step 1 exam and are ready to be registered for core clerkships/clinical electives. If space allows on any given campus a student maybe given the opportunity to begin a core clerkship/clinical elective with only two weeks’ notice, at the discretion of the campus. Notification within this time is not a guarantee of ability of the program to place a student in a given core clerkship/elective.

7. Students approved to defer taking USMLE Step 1 are nonetheless required to participate in all of the Block 8 (Synthesis) part 2 and Block 9 (Transition to Clerkships) course activities. The content and skills in Block 8 part 2 and Block 9 are covered only once per year, so a student intending to begin phase 2 at any time during the 2022-2023 year must participate in all required dates.

8. Any student who defers taking Step 1 is required to meet with their OSA/academic advisor or learning specialist to design a study plan that must be approved by the designated student affairs staff/faculty/dean and must include the components of #2 above. A projected USMLE Step 1 exam date must be provided. Any changes to the student’s approved Step 1 exam date must be reported to the student’s academic advisor or learning specialist.

9. Failure to communicate promptly and reliably during the student’s designated study period and/or failure to follow guidance by OSA staff (i.e. academic skills specialists, advisors, leads, etc.) may result in a professionalism form pursuant to the Student Academic Policies and Professional Standards (APPS). See the APPS for additional details.

Please review the 2021-2022 College of Medicine’s Student Academic Policies and Professional Standards’ policy on Sitting for Step 1 (Section IV.B.)

If a student does not enroll in any credit bearing course work during a single term, the deferral will constitute a Leave of Absence. For more information on Leaves of Absence, go here.

- Such students will be required to make an official request for a Leave of Absence to the Office of Student Affairs for approval.
- If a student requires a leave of absence for the summer term of 2022, the LOA start date will be April 26, 2022.
- Students will meet with their campus academic advising team to review the paperwork, financial aid, course registration and healthcare implications of a leave of absence.
Important Considerations for Deferring the USMLE Step 1 Exam

Core clerkship/clinical elective grades must be received by mid-September of Phase 3 in order to be included in the Medical Student Performance Evaluation (MSPE) and/or the College of Medicine transcript sent to the AAMC Electronic Residency Application Service (ERAS). Any delay taking core clerkships may affect a student’s MSPE quartile, eligibility for AOA, and graduating with honors.

In some cases, it will be necessary for students who do not begin a core clerkship during the summer session to have their projected graduation year changed to the Class of 2025. Such a change in class will defer participation in the residency match programs to the subsequent year. In general, taking Step 1 after October 1 will result in a change of class and participation in residency match programs to a subsequent year.

Registration and Financial Aid:

The following are topics related to the deferred student’s registration in the College of Medicine:

Students are responsible to ensure that their registration is accurate and that it reflects all schedule changes that occur due to their Step 1 exam deferral. Any discrepancies must be reported by the student to college administration.

Any core clerkship or elective with a start date between April 25 and August 12, 2022 is considered a summer course.

All students must be registered for a minimum of six credits in a term to be eligible to receive federal financial aid. Thus, if a deferred student’s semester registration consists of less than six credits, the student is not eligible for financial aid, yet they are responsible for the tuition and fees for any hours for which they are registered, and may be required to pay back any dispersed monies. *Please note, a leave of absence may increase student loan debt.*

Any students who defer taking the Step 1 exam must meet with the COM Office of the Registrar and the COM Office of Financial Aid to discuss the implications of the deferral on their registration and eligibility for student financial aid.

Scheduling:

The following are scheduling topics related to deferring USMLE Step 1:

Students should not attempt to contact individual sites or coordinators to ask for a site assignment. They should work with the Office of Student Affairs and their academic advisors/learning specialists. Contacting core clerkship sites or coordinators is considered unprofessional behavior and can result in a professionalism form pursuant to the professionalism policy. Students who defer Step 1 must still complete the requirements of the phase 2 “Clinical Connections and Competencies” course and will need to complete all course requirements during their fourth year.

In most cases, students are not eligible to do “away” rotations at another medical school until all phase 2 core clerkships have been taken and passed. Having phase 3 status is the usual requirement for being a visiting student at another medical school.
Students are not eligible to start their required Sub-Internship until all phase 2 core clerkships have been taken and passed.

Deferring the step 1 exam may affect scheduling of the Step 2CK licensure exam.

The following are other topics related to deferring taking USMLE Step 1:

Per the College of Medicine’s Student Academic Promotions Policies and Professional Standards, “Time Limit for Completing the MD Degree” a maximum of four years are allowed to complete Phase 1 and pass USMLE Step 1. The four years begin on the first day of phase 1 Orientation.

Questions about any of the information in this document should be directed to your campus Dean of Student Affairs, Office of Student Affairs:
Chicago: (312) 996-2450: Mark Urosev, Assistant Dean of Student Affairs urosev@uic.edu
Rockford (815) 395-5704: Stephanie Williams, Interim Assistant Dean of Student Affairs smwilli7@uic.edu
Peoria (309) 671-8410: Eileen Doherty, Assistant Dean of Student Affairs epd@uic.edu

(Approved by the Offices of Curricular and Student Affairs 12/22/2021)

**Key Elements of a Successful Study Plan:**

The following elements should be included in a study plan.

- A daily or weekly schedule that outlines study topics
- An overview of resources that will be used for study
- A daily or weekly plan for questions
- Dates for practice tests
- Anticipated sit date
- Catch up time (recommended or at least ½ to 1-day a week)
- Time off (recommended at least 1 day a week)
- Wellness plan (exercise, sleep, nutrition, etc...)
- Dates to check in with an academic support staff member